

Desire

by superninja

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Summary: The Obi/Ami/Ani triangle rears its ugly head. Short story.

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He stood solemnly outside the entrance to her private offices. The angry voices within echoed off the inner chamber's walls, but he would not interrupt them. Something inside prevented him from doing so. He still hadn't figured out exactly what that "something" was. If he really thought about it, a vague notion would form in his head -- a cloud of consciousness that would slowly become something solid -- but then was shoved into the back of his mind before it could achieve cohesiveness. The idea of it at all made him uncomfortable.

Standing stick-straight, he turned with his arms clasped behind his back away from Queen Amidala's offices on Coruscant, looking outwards through the glass hallway at the passing traffic beyond. A thriving, bustling world, Coruscant was the seat of the Republic and home to the Galactic Senate. The mighty Senate, which had governed the known galaxy for centuries, making the rule of law and using the might of the Jedi to uphold it. But something was beginning to unravel the Republic. The notion had only been recently voiced by the Jedi Council, but admittedly, if they all really thought about it, the unease could be traced back to ten years prior. The Trade Federation

invasion of Naboo and the emergence of the Sith Lord.

The mysterious creature had appeared from nowhere, full-borne after centuries of extinction (or so they had believed), and after the defeat of his apprentice at Theed, had sunk back into the shadows, never to be heard from again. Until now. Jedi contacts within the Senate spoke of the appearance of a mysterious man in black robes, on Coruscant, conducting secret meetings within the halls of the Senate. Somehow, the mysterious man had managed to evade the Jedi, which was quite frustrating in itself, but he had also managed to keep his contacts hidden as well. They had no names with which to conduct an investigation.

The Jedi Council's initial vote was to double the Jedi's efforts to seek out the Sith Lord. However, wise Yoda had stepped in and reminded Windu and the others of the Will of the Force. He had convinced them to draw no attention to the matter. Given time, Yoda believed the Sith Lord would make himself known. If they acted too quickly, it might drive him back into the shadows. But after the meeting, Yoda had called for Obi-Wan Kenobi, and had told him in secret that he would begin his own investigation into identity of the Sith Lord. He gave Kenobi no clues, but asked him to carry this secret with him and to promise to support him should he call on him for help. Kenobi, dumbfounded, had reluctantly agreed.

"All things revealed in time, shall they be."

The cryptic statement had left Kenobi uneasy.

The door to the chamber behind him swished open, and Obi-Wan turned to catch a glimpse of his apprentice, Anakin Skywalker storming away down the hall. Anakin, in his rage (for his master could feel it coming off him like waves breaking against a beach), took no notice of him and was gone in seconds. Kenobi's eyes fluttered back to the doorway, waiting momentarily for its owner to come rushing out to follow. But it remained empty. Obi-Wan steeled himself and made his entrance at its berth.

"Your highness," he ventured, with the utmost formality.

"Come," answered the voice from inside. There was an edge to it, one noticeable to Kenobi only through his long years of friendship with his Queen.

Making his way inside, he crossed the room to her desk. Head down, she poured over a thick document reading intently. She said nothing to the man standing stiffly before her and Kenobi, being trained in all aspects of diplomatic formality, stood awaiting her acknowledgement. He waited with great patience.

The silence was broken by the sound of a single tear hitting the parchment page.

Kenobi instantly felt the emotional response rage inside him.

Anakin. He fought to hide the expression that was fighting to play across his face. Obi-Wan loved his Queen. He loved his apprentice as well, but he knew that Anakin's rash behavior at times could be frustrating beyond sanity, and that his words in anger held a cutting

edge. Amidala was a great leader -- a proud Queen with a fine temperament and wisdom beyond her years. But she wasn't a Jedi like him. She wasn't trained to block the emotional responses that came with such an attack. And why should she? If she truly believed that Anakin loved her -- if she had given her heart to him -- why **should** she feel the need to protect herself from Anakin as Obi-Wan had?

"What did he say to you?" he asked through clenched teeth.

Shamefully, Amidala kept her head bowed towards the desk. "It is nothing, Jedi. What is your business?"

Obi-Wan could hear her swallowing the pain as she tried to appear dignified. Did she understand that she needn't hide from him? They had shared so much since Qui-Gon's death on Naboo ten years prior. She had comforted him then, but she would not let him do the same now, just as she had refused when Sio Bibble had died. Maybe she had others with whom to seek council? He knew she shared everything inside with Anakin, making herself vulnerable to him, allowing herself to be hurt time and time again. "How can she stand it?" he asked himself for the hundredth time. When he had broached the subject with Anakin recently, hoping to curb his behavior, the boy had become extremely defensive. Obi-Wan relaxed into the crimson-bound chair before the desk. "Or perhaps," he told himself sadly, "I do not understand the true nature of love."

He raised his eyes to find that the Queen had regained her composure and appeared to be studying his features. Her face had resumed the blank expression that had been a valuable tool in negotiations for years before and he guessed for years ahead. The powerful gaze made him somewhat uncomfortable -- like being dissected visually. He hated it. He broke his gaze from her and turned it outward, to the glass wall beyond and Coruscant. His eyebrows knotted unconsciously as his hand rested against his bearded chin.

"Why is it, Jedi knight," she asked bemusedly, "that your concentration seems to wane when you enter these walls?"

Blue eyes flickered back to hers quickly in challenge, unsoftened by the slight expression of mirth on her face. She rose from the desk and circled around behind him.

"It's only a room -- it has four walls, a ceiling and a floor, just like any other."

Obi-Wan continued to face forward, annoyed by the taunting tone in her voice despite the humor behind it. He tensed in his seat, gripping the armrests.

"Maybe it is the occupant that makes you so..."

Rising quickly he turned towards her, catching her off guard, and forcing her to take a step back.

"You are an excellent strategist, my Queen. You have successfully managed to divert my line of questioning." He saw her features darken at this, but still continued. "So I will reward you by allowing you success." Rigidly she regained her regal demeanor and raised her chin

haughtily.

"I come," he continued, clasping his hands at their familiar place (behind his back), "to discuss with you an issue that has arisen in the Jedi Council."

"Yes?" came the response, with just a hint of arrogance.

His eyes fluttered briefly at the tone. "Damned if she cannot be frustrating!" Kenobi told himself. In that way, she and Anakin were alike. Both very fiery, always questioning everything and becoming defensive when questioned themselves. He could remember a time when she had not been so quickly incensed, and wondered momentarily if Anakin's influence had a hand in it. But he reminded himself that her behavior had nothing to do with the conversation at hand.

"The Jedi Council would like your permission in beginning midichlorian testing on the Gungans."

"Hmm..." she pondered, suddenly becoming thoughtful. Obi-Wan was pleased that her duties as Queen allowed her to push her personal feelings aside. Maybe the conversation could be salvaged after all. "I think that perhaps Boss Nass should be consulted on this matter, and not myself."

"Of course he will be, your highness. But the Gungans have no formal representation in the Senate, so the Council felt that it would be appropriate for you to approach Boss Nass."

"That will be changing soon, Obi-Wan," she answered. Resting on the edge of her desk, she toyed with a small stone sculpture residing there. "Jar Jar Binks will soon be the Naboo's senator". Obi-Wan's eyebrows raised in disbelief. It had been years since he had seen the clumsy Gungan, and quite frankly, he found the idea of Jar Jar becoming anything worthwhile, much less a senator, shocking.

"Jar Jar Binks? Surely you are joking?"

Amidala looked up at him with a hint of offense. "Why not? Jar Jar has received a fine education over the last six years at Theed by my finest advisors. Not only is he prepared to represent the Naboo, but the Gungans as well. I believe it is a most beneficial solution to equal representation of both our peoples in the Senate."

"Oh, yes," he said, nearly laughing as he considered the idea again. "It sounds quite delightful." He turned to Amidala to see her staring at him again with that unfathomable gaze. This time, he decided to vent his frustrations. "Must you?" he pleaded.

"I'm sorry," she conceded, looking away. "It's just so rare that you let your guard down, Obi-Wan. It is a welcome intrusion. It seems like I have so little joy as of late." Her voice faded off at this, and realizing her mistake, looked up quickly at Obi-Wan and then moved away swiftly towards the window. "I will tell Boss Nass of the Council's request," she said with her back to him.

Her eyes closed in regret as she felt his presence behind her and she gazed out of the glass at the passing transports that dotted the eternal skyline of her home-away-from-home.

"It pains me to see you hurt, my Queen."

"Obi-Wan..." she turned back towards him, and stopped with a jerk, not realizing how close he was to her. She drew her hands back towards herself to prevent from touching him, noting the reaction did not go unnoticed.

Kenobi shifted uncomfortably. "Amidala, if you are ever in need of council you have only to ask." Avoiding his gaze by looking down, she remained silent. "Amidala," he said, this time reaching out and gently clasping one of her hands, "It would be unbearable knowing that I could never repay the kindness you once showed me." He placed a crooked finger under her chin and tipped her chin up to him. "I am your friend, my Queen."

And something more, perhaps? Obi-Wan's eyes widened as cloud of emotion descended on him. Swiftly, he removed his hand from her face and gave her hand a small squeeze before releasing it as well. But his eyes never left hers, and in horror he watched an expression of confusion come over her face. That familiar feeling had come over him again. That ugly little vapor from his consciousness that emerged from time to time. In his confusion he had always managed to subvert it before, but as he stood before her now he could no longer deny its name.

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"Obi-Wan? What's wrong?"

He backed away from her to slowly to a safe distance, then bowed to her at the waist. What could he say? She stood there staring at him quizzically. "My offer stands, your Highness, should you ever choose to accept it. I will carry to the Jedi Council your word to reach the Gungans on their behalf. Good day."

And with that, he spun on his heels and left her alone in her chambers.

Prologue

Amidala waited until he had left, and then sank into the chair in a mixture of emotion and frustration. Obi-Wan had seemed unfathomable before, but now -- it appeared as if their friendship was drifting further and further apart each day.

The document still needed her signature, she remembered, slipping back into her queenly role. But as soon as she picked up the writing implement, she put it down in frustration and buried her head in her hands.

She wanted to tell Obi-Wan -- but how could she? She and Anakin had fought just minutes before about that very thing. Anakin had accused her of sharing confidences with Obi-Wan about their relationship. He had explained to her that it was hard enough to endure the training

without Obi-Wan interfering in his personal life as well. And the trials were only a year away! He had told her the Jedi Council already did not approve of their relationship, that they believed it dissolved his focus, and Kenobi was a direct line to the Council. Now her sharing this with Obi-Wan would only confirm their suspicions!

It had been very upsetting. Anakin did not want to lose her, nor she him, but it was putting so much strain on them both. "After the Trials," he had said, "things will settle down...we can be married! The Council will not deny me once I am knighted."

Amidala wiped away the few tears that had fallen, and stared across the room. She had wanted to tell Obi-Wan very badly. Anakin's behavior had changed recently, almost as if there were two people living within him. He lost his temper now more and more frequently. Like a dark cloud hanging over them. She had felt it once before, on Naboo at Qui-Gon's funeral; but it had passed and their lives had moved on with great happiness and promise of more to come.

Offhand she wondered how Obi-Wan had come about confronting Anakin. She had told him nothing, despite the confidence they had shared in Theed so long ago. Now she wondered if her silence had been a mistake.

Only time would tell.

The End

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file.